September 22, 1952

The following letter was sent to Dr. Barnard Joy, Chairman of the Arlington County School Board.

Dr. Barnard Joy
Arlington County School Board
Arlington, Virginia

Dear Dr. Joy:

As you are no doubt acquainted and familiar with present conditions regarding socialism and communism in most all phases of our governments, education, entertainment, labor and industry I thought you and the other members of the board might be interested in a diplomatic method of being sure there weren't any subversive books, teachers and personnel in the Arlington schools but if there were you would want to be the first to expel such treachery without harming all loyal people in our educational system in Arlington.

Due to the expose' of subversion in schools in other sections of the Country we must not submit to the belief that it can't happen here. You must realize that one communist slipped through your review board and the State Board so, therefore, if one can get by undetected otners could also.

During the past twenty years many people have joined organizations which might have been clean and free of subversives at the time of joining but later they became infiltrated with communistic doctrines and direction without detection. These people are now members of a party or organizations that have been cited as being communistic.

In view of legally constituted committees holding secret investigations regarding books and teachers in the New York area and elsewhere it is necessary to start your own investigation and by this investigation I do not mean to cause embarrassment to all teachers and personnel.

We must protect the people who are loyal but the disloyal shall be exposed and discharged. Unless the school board takes this matter into their hands they may find themselves in a very embarrassing position later on.

My suggestion is first, to request Mr. Walsh to write the following form letter to each teacher and principal stating these facts:

A. If you now or have ever belonged to an organization which you might feel is subversive in any way you are at liberty to resign from that organization by letter with a copy to me. Your letter will be not only confidential but will be retained under lock and key.

B. We will have the full support of the D.A.R., American Legion, Chamber of Commerce, all social organizations and thousands of loyal individuals. Your job will not be jeopardized by being frank but your job will be made more secure by taking this action.

C. If you feel that any book, books, pamphlets which you use in the class room or any literature you receive at home is subversive you are requested to inform me by letter and this will also be held under lock and key.

D. Our purpose in this matter is to give you full protection from outside pressure groups, goon squads, and unscrupulous characters who might try to force you to become a traitor to your Country and even your own children. You must cooperate in preventing all children from being sold into slavery.

E. It is necessary that we all join in this crusade against communism and drive any subversive people from our educational institutions and remove any subversive book from the schools.

I would appreciate your comments by return mail.

Sincerely yours,

B. M. "Red" Miller

B. M. MILLER

MILLER WELDING SUPPLY COMPANY

DISTRIBUTOR

WELDING AND CUTTING APPARATUS—WELDING SUPPLIES

1109 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

November 1, 1952

Miss Thornton, Librarian
1426 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, Va.

Dear Miss Thornton:

Will you please advise if you have the following six books in the Arlington schools. These books are on the Virginia approved list.

You and Your Community by O'Rourke - published by Heath.

The Government of the United States by Walker - Beach - Jamison - published by Scribner.

American Government 1949 by Magruder - published by Allyn and Bacon.

World History by Smith - Muzzy - Lloyd - published by Ginn.

Geography Around the World by McConnell - published by Rand.

The Standard Building of our Nation by Barker - Commanger - published by Webb-Row.

Will you also give me the names of the people on the Arlington book review board.

Will you also advise me if the following books are in the Arlington schools.

Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 19 - 1950.
Encyclopedia Americana, Volume 27 - 1951.
Collier's Encyclopedia, Volume 17-19 1950.
The World Bood Encyclopedia, Volume 17 - 1951

Yours very truly,

B M Miller

B. M. MILLER

January 9, 1953

Mr. Charles J. Walsh
1426 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, Va.

Dear Mr. Walsh:

Following is a list of school text-books which I wish you would have checked and advise which ones are used in the Arlington schools:

TITLE	AUTHOR	YES	NO
American Democracy Today & Tomorrow	Hyllis A. Goslin, Omar P. Goslin, Helen F. Storen - - - -		
American Government - - - - - -	Frank A. Magruder - - - -	X	
American Economic History - - - - - -	Harold U. Faulkner - - - -		
American Economic History - - - - - -	Broadus Mitchell & Louise P. Mitchell - - - -		
Applied Economics - - - - - -	Raymond T. Bye & William H. Hewett - - - -		
Building of Our Nation - - - - - -	Eugene C. Barker, Henry S. Commager, Walter P. Webb - - - -	X	
Challenge of Democracy - - - - - -	Theodore P. Wlaich, J. C. Baumgarten - - - -		
Changing Countries & Changing Peoples	Harold Rugg - - - -		
Economics: An Introductory Analysis - -	Paul A. Samuelson - - - -		
Economics in Everyday Life - - - - - -	Leonard E. Goodman, William L. Moore - - - -	X	
Economic Problems of Today - - - - - -	Jacob Klein & Woolf Colvin - - -		
Elementary Economics - - - - - -	Leland J. Gordon - - - -		
Fundamentals of Economics - - - - - -	Myron H. Ashcroft, Elgin F. Hunt & Charles V. Hinter - - - -		
Grammar of American Politics - The National Government - - - - - -	Wilfred E. Binkley & Malcolm C. Moos - - - -		
History of Our Country - - - - - -	David S. Muzzey - - - -	X	
Making Our Government Efficient - - -	Leonard D. White, Messre L. Goldschmidt, Donald M. Gestleberry & Edwin A. Cary - - - -		
Modern Economics - - - - - -	James F. Corbett & Minna Colvin - - - -	X	
Our Changing Social Order - - - - - -	Ruth Wood Gavian, A. A. Gray & Ernest R. Groves - - - -		

TITLE	AUTHOR	YES	NO
Our Democracy and Its Problems	L. J. O'Rourke		
Politics in Action	Arthur N. Holcombe & James E. Downes		
Problems Facing American Democracy	Horace Kidger	X	
Readings for the Atomic Age	edited by M. David Hoffman		
Readings in Government in American Society	Ray Harvey, Theodore Skinner, Albert Somit & Rita Mealem		
Roots of Political Behavior - Introduction to Government and Politics	Richard Carlton Snyder & H. Hubert Wilson		
Social Living	Paul H. Landis & Judson T. Landis	X	
Soviet Politics, At Home & Abroad	Frederick L. Schuman		
Story of American Democracy	Mabel B. Casner & Ralph H. Gabriel		
Teaching Texts to Accompany the Story of Democracy	Mabel B. Casner & J. W. Tilton		
Workers At Home & Away With Teachers Guide	Alta McIntire & Wilhelmina Hill		
World History	Boak, Slosson & Anderson		
World At Work	Wallace W. Atwood		
World History	Wallace E. Caldwell & Edward H. Merrill		
Your Life In a Democracy	Howard E. Brown	X	
U.S.A. An American History For the Upper Grades	Harold U. Faulkner, Tyler Kepner & Victor E. Pitkin		
Your Family Life & Marriage	Landis	X	
Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 27, 1951		X	
Encyclopedia Britannica Vol. 19, 1950		X	
The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 17, 1951		X	
The Old World and Its Gifts	J. G. Meyer, O. Stuart Hamer & Lillian Grisso		
The American Way of Business, Part I, Analysis	Oscar Lange & Abba P. Lerner		
Part II, Teaching Aids	A. W. Troelstrup		
Problems in American Democracy	S. Howard Patterson		
America's History	Lewis Paul Todd	6	
A Cultural History of Education	F. Freeman Butts		
American History, 1492 to the Present Day	Southworth & Southworth		
Iroquois Publishing Co., Inc. - 1946			
My Worth to the World - Studies in Citizenship	Louise I. Capen & D. Montfort Melchoir		
American Book Co., - 1945			

TITLE	AUTHOR	YES	NO
Making Of Modern America Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1950	Leon H. Canfield & Howard B. Wilder		
Principles Of Economics McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1947	Albert E. Waugh		
Psychology, Its Principles and Applications World Book Company, 1950	T. L. Engle		X
The Power in the People D. Van Nostrand Co., 1949	Felix Morley		
Understanding Our Free Economy D. Van Nostrand Co., 1952	Fred A. Fairchild & Esther B. Findley		
Your Rugged Constitution Stanford University Press, Calif.	Bruce A. Findlay & Esther B. Findlay		X

Yours sincerely,

B. M. Miller

ARLINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Office of the Superintendent
1426 North Quincy Street
Arlington 7, Virginia

The School Board, at its regular meeting on April 10, 1958, approved a motion requiring all teachers to answer a question regarding affiliation with the Communist Party or other subversive organizations.

The Board passed the following motion:

> "To ask the Administration to take immediate and adequate steps to inquire of each teacher, when signing an Arlington School Contract, of his or her present or former membership in the Communist Party or other subversive organizations."

The Board also requested the Administration to make a study toward implementation of this policy.

After careful study and consultation with the Board of Education, the Superintendent believes that the Board's desires would best be expressed by setting forth the questions in the following manner:

1. Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party? Yes ☐ No ☐
2. Have you ever belonged to a subversive organization as defined by the United States Attorney General? Yes ☐ No ☐

If the answer to either of the above is "Yes" give the name and address of the organization and the period of your membership therein.

The above questions are to be incorporated in the teacher's application form.

May 8, 1958

ARLINGTON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

April 28, 1958

MEMORANDUM

TO: A.E.A. Councilmen

FROM: Richard G. Neal, Executive Secretary

SUBJECT: Proposed loyalty oath

In accordance with the motions adopted by the Council on April 28, the following information regarding loyalty oaths is being submitted. Please discuss this material with the teachers in your school and be prepared to make recommendations for action by the Association with regard to the proposed loyalty oath at the special council meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 1958, at 4:00 p.m. in the Wakefield High School Library.

"The merits and dangers of loyalty oaths for teachers have been much debated, both in and out of the profession. The arguments in favor of oaths may be summarized as follows:

(1) 'Subversive' teachers can be discharged on the legal ground of oath violation more easily than on more intangible bases related to "subversive" activities:
(2) The taking of an oath tends to increase the prestige of the post of teacher, for provision is customarily made for public officers to take oaths;
(3) An oath can be stimulating and satisfying, as the Hippocratic Oath of physicians;
(4) The taking of oaths by teachers has a salutary effect on the public.
(5) Teachers should be willing to swear to true statements.

"The points against requiring oaths include:

(1) They are ineffective in rooting out 'subversives,' for anyone who is disloyal to his country would not shrink from perjury;
(2) Some oaths are so worded that any semblance of academic freedom could be abrogated by fanatical enforcement;
(3) Some teachers object to the imputations in the requirement of an oath not mandated for all citizens;
(4) Some teachers of unquestionable loyalty are bound by religious tenets from taking oaths;
(5) The prescription of an oath tends to bring about a sense of false security in the minds of many citizens." (Elsbree, Willard S., and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., Staff Personnel in the Public Schools. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1954, p. 314.)

The contracts now used in the Arlington County Public Schools contain the following oath statement:

"4. The said teacher hereby swears or affirms allegiance and loyalty to the Constitution of Virginia and the Constitution of the United States."

(CONTRACT WITH PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS, Form C. No. 3--Revised 2-1-55--60M)

In addition, all contracts for new teachers and contracts for all probationary teachers will, in the future, contain the following question under the section "SPECIAL COVENANTS.":

"5. Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party or any other subversive organizations? Yes ☐ No ☐

This question was developed from the following statement adopted by the Arlington County School Board. The statement is taken from the minutes which, however, have not been formally adopted.

"To ask the administration to take immediate and adequate steps to inquire of each teacher when signing the Arlington School contract of his or her present or former membership in the Communist Party or other subversive organizations."

Mr. Irving Ferman, General Counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union has stated that it would seem that the proposed oath "is unconstitutional without any doubt in view of Weiman versus Updegraff 344 U. S. 183, December 15, 1952. It is specifically unconstitutional for the following reasons: (1) The oath violates the guarantee of due process because the scope of its provision is vague and uncertain. (2) The fact of membership creates a conclusive presumption of disloyalty, which the court in the Weiman case said is an assertion of arbitrary power. This would be so under the proposed oath because there would be no determination on an individual basis of facts concerning a person's membership in a particular organization. (3) Even if the Virginia State Court would consider that knowledge at the time of membership was not a factor to be considered in the interpretation of the oath required, the oath would still be an unconstitutional assumption of power under the Weiman case."

Mr. Butler, attorney from the NEA present at the Council meeting on April 28 stated "The way this oath is now worded appears to be unconstitutional", and added that he would agree with Mr. Ferman's evaluation of the constitutionality of the proposed oath as worded above.

THE STRUGGLE FOR OUR CHILDREN'S MINDS

SPEAK OUT, SILENT PEOPLE

Are public schools falling down on the job? Are our children getting the education they need and are entitled to? A top reporter begins a searching look at America's schools—and finds some startling answers

By HOWARD WHITMAN

AMERICAN EDUCATION has drifted into the gravest crisis in its 300-year history. The future not only of our public schools but of our country may depend on what all of us do about it now.

Deteriorating buildings and the shortage of teachers are only a part of that crisis. Most important is what is being taught our children and how it is being taught. Subtly, unnoticed by most Americans, highly organized left-wing and right-wing extremist groups are exerting unprecedented pressures on the public schools in a struggle to capture the minds of our children—the minds of the future citizens of the United States. The pressure groups already have gained a foothold in a number of communities across the country and are reaching out for others. Parents in many of these cities and towns are discovering that their children no longer are being given the basic education needed to face today's problems, let alone enter college. Some children no longer are taught how to write. Censorship is reaching into the classrooms to ban objective study, even of such American-supported organizations as the United Nations.

Never before have our schools what they believe in, what and how they teach, needed such a searching inquiry. Never before have the health and strength of the nation more critically demanded it.

Just what is happening to our educational system? Who are the people responsible for the changes? What are they trying to accomplish? What can or should be done to bring about reforms? Collier's has assigned writer Howard Whitman to make a long-term, continuing study of the situation.

Whitman has talked and will continue to talk with educators, administrators, teachers, parents and children throughout the country. He has visited and will continue to visit schools in every section of the land.

His first article begins on the next page. It points up the importance of the problem, reveals some of the excesses that are creeping into our schools, and reports what has happened when alarmed parents tried to bring about reform. His findings may startle, even frighten you. But we hope they will show why you should take a close look at the schools in your own community, why you should speak out when you find abuses.

HANS KNOPF

Howard Whitman

In future articles, appearing at intervals, Whitman will report on such timely questions as an ideal school, the pros and cons of progressive education, laxity of discipline, the evolution in report cards, what makes good teachers, and the growing centralization of ideas in education.

We begin this series with no preconceived solutions. We do not expect to complete it without some solutions in our minds. We believe you, too, will decide certain steps should be taken to improve your schools. Whatever you decide, speak out, make known your opinions. In a democracy, silence may be the greatest wrong of all. —THE EDITORS

. . . SPEAK OUT, SILENT PEOPLE

HOW much bunk and nonsense have crept into our American educational system while we've been busy watching the rest of the world—too busy to see what's been going on under our noses. How effective are our public schools at their basic job—teaching?

Millions of parents would like to know the answers. And from coast to coast a good many are trying to find out. Never before in the long evolution of American education has so acrid a struggle been fought over our public schools. It is a struggle ranging all the way from windy debates by professors at educational forums to virtual hair-pulling matches in the neighborhoods. Over it all hover the pressure groups, right wing and left wing, waiting their chances. The prize in the middle is rich and rare. The prize is your child and mine.

Education has become a subject of increasing public controversy for good reason. Our schools are the key to tomorrow. What seems like a surface argument over, say, the three R's, actually goes to the core of our constantly evolving philosophy of living. A debate over abolition of report cards stems from fundamental views about competition, incentive and reward, not only in school but in life. Wrapped up in arguments over laxity of discipline are the most pointed divergencies in philosophy and morals.

Politically, this country declared itself preponderantly conservative at the last national election. But we hold no national election to determine the philosophy of education; the question must be worked out locally in each city, town or school district. Thus the struggle for our children's minds has broken out in community after community across the nation, from Pasadena, California, to Port Washington, Long Island.

I have seen some of the struggle at firsthand. In the long run, one must believe—or at least hope—that these vociferous fights are good for our country, that they represent democracy working out its problems. Yet for the present, the implications of the battle are frightening; some of the skirmishes I saw were spine-chilling.

I have seen innocent people castigated, ostracized in their communities, simply because they insisted that their children learn more in school. I have heard them called reactionaries, even Fascists, because they objected to the abandonment of report cards, or to lack of discipline, or to neglect of fundamental studies. With appalling frequency I have heard conscientious citizens branded "enemies of the public schools" simply because they opposed the strangle hold professional educators have achieved on some of our nation's schools.

At the other end of the battle line, I have seen hatemongers try to prostitute a struggle for better education into a throttling of all that is American. As usual, they do it in the name of patriotism. I have heard loyal American teachers—as fine a segment of our people as can be found—unjustly smeared as "Reds" and "Commies."

That is why I call this first report Speak Out, Silent People. If you and I—parents, believers in the best in education, believers in our country—remain silent, we are beaten. We lose by default to the far left or far right.

In St. Paul, Minnesota, Lloyd A. Moulds, a businessman and father of three school children, went to a parent-teacher association meeting in 1951 to find out about a new report card being introduced in St. Paul high schools. It eliminated the grading system, A,B,C,D and F, and substituted Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory.

"At the meeting," Moulds told me, "bigwigs got up and said this new system would eliminate competition. Students weren't to compete with one another for grades any more; each would compete only with himself. We were going to mark them only on whether they were satisfactorily doing what they were able to do.

"I couldn't believe it," Moulds went on. "I decided someone was being sold a bill of goods."

Moulds thought competition and achievement should be encouraged, not discouraged. It seemed to him that the adult world rated people on what they accomplished—not on how satisfactorily they were doing what they were able to do.

Several other men at the meeting shared Moulds's beliefs. They got together with him later and decided to look into the new-type report cards and the philosophy behind them. In September, 1952, after lengthy research, they presented to the school board a 3,000-word bill of particulars.

Said one paragraph: "The abolition of grades is contrary to an age-old truth—that man's incentive to work is for reward. Competition is a stimulus for achievement whether in sports or in school. Football, baseball and basketball games are played with the main objective—to win. Eliminate the scoring from these events, and the players and spectators would lose interest. Eliminate scoring in golf—how many people would continue to be enthused about golf?"

The protest and the brief were taken under consideration by the school board. Eight months later, with the matter still "under consideration," the Murray High School P.T.A. held a panel discussion on report cards. More than 500 parents attended. Mothers and fathers who wanted a return to the incentive grading system ran away with the meeting —until the gavel-banging chairman stopped the discussion. He would not permit a vote.

"That was when I started getting it in the neck," Moulds recalled. He said he was accused of being a Fascist, a paid agent, a crackpot, and—of course —of trying to wreck the school system. "I think the worst moment of it all," he remarked, "was the day my own child came home and asked, 'Daddy, are you an enemy of the schools?' "

Moulds submitted further arguments for a grading system in a letter to the school board. It concluded: "It is my sincere hope that the committees and the individuals concerned with a review of this subject will confine their efforts to the subject at hand—namely, report cards. If developments disclose a disposition to put *me* on trial and let the report-card system remain 'under consideration,' then indeed the pattern revealed in other cities is also being followed here."

Housewife Opposes "Half-Baked" System

Across the Mississippi River in Robbinsdale, a suburb of Minneapolis, Mrs. Harley Moxness, a housewife and mother, also had the temerity to stand up and oppose what she considered a half-baked reporting system. The Robbinsdale schools had abandoned grades and were rating students Marked Achievement, Satisfactory Progress or Improvement Needed, according to each child's ability. The joker, Mrs. Moxness felt, was that there was no standard of achievement for each school grade. Moreover, the mediocre student could get as good a report card as the best student, and the worst student could get a better report card than either of them.

When I called on Mrs. Moxness at her home, she was suspicious and edgy at first. Opponents had probed into her past, accused her of sinister connections, branded her an "enemy of the schools."

After I convinced her that I wasn't investigating her, Mrs. Moxness told me the price she had paid for questioning school policies. "One anonymous phone caller accused me of collaborating with some man in New York named Zoll I'd never heard of," she said. (The reference was to the extremist, Allen Zoll.) "I tried to ask who was calling. Instead of an answer, I heard myself called an uneducated dummy. Then I heard that, on account of me, my little girl didn't have a friend left in school.

"After that phone call I was bewildered," Mrs. Moxness said. "I was numb for a few minutes. Then I sat down and cried."

Later a P.T.A. leader phoned her and asked. "What about those secret meetings you've been

In one Washington, D.C., junior high school, there are 100 children who don

holding in your basement?" There had been no such meetings, secret or otherwise.

In Minneapolis, a representative of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools (a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the improvement of public schools and financed by such organizations as the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation) received a call from Robbinsdale to "come out here and see if Allen Zoll is involved in this." Zoll, a onetime associate of hate fronters, entered the education field in 1948 with an organization called the National Council for American Education. He probably would have been forgotten by now, but for left-wing propaganda machines which conjure him up as the mastermind of every citizens' group which criticizes the schools.

The Minneapolis man went to Robbinsdale and investigated. His advice: "You're just jumpy. The thing for you to do is put your own house in order and stop seeing spooks under the bed."

Brookline, Massachusetts, has been another battle front. This thriving Boston suburb last spring suddenly discovered that its 6,700 public-school children were not being taught how to write, but only how to print. That the discovery took Brookline by surprise indicates how blind many Americans have been to what's been going on under their noses; the Brookline School Committee had been eliminating script writing for nine years.

Many school systems teach printing in the first two or three grades—as an aid to reading, chiefly—and then switch to script. But Brookline threw out script completely—with one slight exception: children were taught how to write their own names. The concession may have resulted from the fact that when the pupils set up a school bank, a student teller refused to accept the check of another student because he couldn't write his name.

Last May, six parents formed a Parents' Research Committee and sweated out the summer gathering research on handwriting and the teaching of it. Then they took their case to school officials. In reply they got only what Mrs. Marion M. Wilkins, chairman of the committee, described as "sickeningly evasive letters."

When Brain Surgeons Control Schools

"We found out what many other parents have found out when they tried to make their voices heard by school authorities," said another member of the parents' committee. "We found that schools no longer belong to the people, the parents, the taxpayers who foot the bills. The 'professional educators'—I call them the 'brain surgeons'—have taken over, and the public be damned!"

Hot tempers reached a boiling point last October, when an open meeting on handwriting was held in Pierce School, one of Brookline's eight elementary schools. Some 450 parents jammed the old New England open-beamed auditorium, with standees two and three deep along the frescoed walls. Within 10 seconds of the call to order, chairman Carl Seltzer, a School Committee member, banged his gavel and clamped on a gag rule, limiting each speaker to five minutes. Attorney Joseph Robinson, the parents' research director, stomped in the aisle shouting, "I object! I protest!"

Words tumbled over one another as parents told of their experiences with children who had been taught only to print. "My son, twelve years old, got a post card from a cousin in New York," said one father. "It was written in script and he couldn't read it. He had to bring it to me and say, 'Please read it to me so I can answer her.' "

"Only this morning a letter was brought into a fourth-grade class and only one child could read it—a transfer pupil from New York," another father related.

"Our children can't even read letters from their parents," a mother complained. "All we want is for our children to be able to read our handwriting and for us to be able to read theirs."

Another mother said her teen-aged son had taken a job as a grocery clerk but couldn't read handwritten orders. A father told how in despair he had bought a book on script handwriting and begun teaching his son at home.

As the meeting ended, with no decision but certain promise that the battle would continue, Mrs. Wilkins and School Superintendent Ernest Caverly came face to face near the exit. The flashing-eyed woman and the austere superintendent stood 10 inches apart, color welling in their faces.

"You can't tell me to keep quiet, *sir!*" she said.

"Yes I can—and I will!" said the superintendent.

"Oh, no, you won't. This is a democracy, *sir!*"

"Well, I will tell you to keep quiet!"

Illiteracy rate among Washington junior-high pupils dismayed Principal Muriel Alexander

James R. Miles charged Arlington, Va., school board used trick procedure to shut out public

H. A. Anderson, Minnesota farmer, said that school discipline has gone "down the drain"

Dr. Clark Kuebler, Ripon College president, said schools may produce cult of mediocrity

Lloyd Moulds was called "enemy of schools" when he protested new St. Paul report cards

Attorney Joseph Robinson helped lead battle in Brookline, Mass., to restore handwriting

"I dare you, *sir!*"

"I can and I will—KEEP QUIET!"

The superintendent and the lady, each numb with rage, were led their separate ways by friends.

As I was packing my brief case to leave, the husband of a member of the School Committee thrust his head forward from a clump of people and said: "It isn't just handwriting these people want. They want to *wreck the schools.* Zoll will be moving in."

Allen Zoll, whose name is dragged into nearly every local controversy, has been described as a man of mystery. Actually he is not mysterious at all. He has been associated with Merwin K. Hart and other right-wing extremists; he was described at a hearing of the House un-American Activities Committee as a "very strong anti-Semite" and he was co-founder and commander of American Patriots, Inc., an organization listed by the Attorney General's office as Fascist and subversive.

He is executive vice-president of the National Council for American Education, which maintains headquarters in New York City and lists as its aims, "to eradicate Socialism, Communism and all forms of Marxism from the schools and colleges of America, and to stimulate sound, American education." Its principal activity has been to ferret out what it regards as subversive references in school textbooks and call them to the attention of local school boards.

Zoll and others like him have moved into areas where there is discontent over schools and tried to get their own ideas incorporated in the curriculum. But the existence of this handful of right-wing extremists with an un-American taint should no more be distorted into a smear against all critics of the schools than the existence of a few Communists in our school systems should be twisted into a smear against all educators.

The Fact That Worries Parents Most

What disturbed parents most in the numerous communities I visited was not extreme right-wing or left-wing hysteria, but this fundamental fact: children were sent to school to learn and many of them weren't learning as much or as fast as they should.

In Washington, D.C., Mrs. Muriel Alexander, principal of Kelly Miller Junior High, told me: "We have one hundred children in this school who can't read and write. Imagine—in junior high school!"

Other principals and teachers complained that today's schools "teach only sight reading and neglect phonetics so that children stumble over new words and spell badly," "don't require a standard of accomplishment to pass from one grade to another," and "go overboard on this business of 'letting them learn at their own rate of speed'—so that lots of children loaf along and don't learn at all."

One fourth-grade teacher in Minneapolis, determined to find out just how much or how little her students knew about writing and spelling, gave them a standard achievement test which included the following paragraph:

"We have a tiny white kitty we call Snowball. She is very wise and gentle and learns many tricks which make us laugh. She likes to hang across the back of a chair and slap at her tail as she swings it back and forth. Snowball likes to climb into the branches of a tree and then drop softly into our arms below. She hides when she hears thunder but comes out when the angry storm is over."

The teacher dictated the passage slowly and asked the children to write it. I saw six samples of what they wrote. Here is one sample—and not the worst one:

"We have a teine weit keite we coldit sowball. She is var weis and gant and lers meane tris wait make us leaf. Shie like to haaing acoras a sear and slap at her teal as shie swing it ba-k and atoth. Sowball like to lin in to the brais of a tree and then drup sefle in to the arens beloi. Shie haids we shie heirs thader. buh coms oat wen the aingre stom is over."

BOSTON GLOBE PHOTO

Children of Mrs. Rita Mahon, a member of Brookline, Mass., Parents' Research Committee, practice their hand printing. From left to right: Donna, 10; Pauline, 11; and Claire, 8

While inability to handle our basic tool of living, the English language, may shock many a parent, it does not shock some educators. In the Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, one enthusiastic supporter of the new teaching methods wrote: "We shall someday accept the thought that it is just as illogical to assume that every boy must be able to read as it is that each one must be able to perform on a violin, that it is no more reasonable to require that each girl shall spell well than it is that each one shall bake a good cherry pie." He acknowledged that the idea would take "a lot of selling."

In my travels I met a great many parents who weren't buying.

In Arlington, Virginia, Washington's neighbor across the Potomac, one troubled parent told me: "School ought to be a place where a child goes to learn, not to fritter away his time on all kinds of 'projects' and 'activities' and nonessentials at the expense of learning." Another complained: "If you ask me, the three R's in our schools today stand for Rest, Relax and Receive." These were everyday parents—not experts—speaking from their deep intuitive feelings about what education ought to be. But many experts share their misgivings about some of today's schools.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, former chancellor of the University of Chicago, writes in his new book, Conflict in Education, that the modern trend "has ended in the concept of the educational system as a gigantic playpen in which the young are to amuse themselves until we are ready to have them do something serious."

In Wisconsin, Dr. Clark Kuebler, president of Ripon College, has found—as has many another educator—that playpen preparation hardly equips a student for college. He told me, "All this folderol in our schools can produce only one thing: a cult of mediocrity. We have students at Ripon who resent the schools they attended for not equipping them with the basic tools of learning."

Students at the college confirmed Dr. Kuebler's remark. One said, "I went to a high school where you could tinker with your car and get credit for it. That sure isn't helping me hit these freshman courses." An upperclassman said, "The thing that gripes me is that they didn't teach us any English grammar in high school. How can they expect you to learn a foreign language when you don't know the grammar of your own language?"

Like scores of other colleges, Ripon has had to establish special courses to bring some of its freshmen up to the level where they can start college work. In subfreshman math ("dummy math," the students call it), an instructor told me, "We've had students who can't even add and subtract when the numbers are complicated. We have to start at about the sixth-grade level to teach them."

"In subfreshman English," commented another faculty member, "we have to teach them a vocabulary before we even can talk to them about the English language. Their preparation is staggeringly bad. Some of them don't know a verb from a noun. They have no idea of a complete sentence."

One instructor showed me such gems from freshman themes as, "Years pasted (for 'passed') by," and "While in high school, the college would leave us use the library," along with such novelties of spelling as "steaples," "effert," "difinetly," and "nessesary."

"Oh, well," sighed a farmer with whom I talked in Maple Plain, Minnesota, "they say the only goal of education today is to teach children how to 'get along.' " He ran a hand through his flaxen hair and added, "That'd be all right—except they don't teach them that either."

This farmer was Harold A. Anderson, dairyman and turkey grower, who was elected to the school board of the Orono Consolidated District last spring. Orono embraces several rural villages with a population ranging from commuting Minneapolis millionaires to grass-roots countryfolk.

"I don't see that modern schools teach children to 'get along,' " Anderson continued. "From what I've seen, they teach just the opposite. Here at our high school, we've had the kids fighting in the classroom, throwing stuff around. Why, they even shot off firecrackers in the schoolhouse and put fish heads in the ventilating system."

One day, Anderson related, his fourteen-year-old son, Wayne, took a cousin, Bruce, to Orono High School as a guest. When Bruce was presented to the teacher, she said, "You'd better go up to study hall. The boys get pretty rough in here."

"Whereupon," Anderson went on, "the boys started pulling Bruce into the room and the teacher

began pulling him out. They had him at the door there, pulling him by the arms—a regular tug of war. The boy told me later, 'I thought I'd be torn apart.' Well, the tug of war ended when one of the boys picked up a book and threw it at the teacher. She let go."

To Anderson, a forgotten virtue called discipline—whether in the form of law and order in a community or rules in a football game—is the real key to "getting along."

"Modern educators have thrown discipline down the drain," he complained.

But what rankled most—and led Anderson to run for the school board—was being shut out of school-board meetings. For two years he had been attending every meeting, holding to the basic American idea that public schools belong to the people. "I went to the meetings," he said, "but whenever anything important came up, the board would go into 'executive session' and ask me to go out. At five out of six meetings I was sent home."

In one of his campaign speeches, Anderson promised that, if elected, he would "not be a party to sending home people who are interested enough to give up an evening to visit a school-board meeting. In fact, I feel attendance should be encouraged."

Anderson was not alone in his belief. In many communities, I found strident objection to school boards operating behind the curtain of "executive sessions"—in effect, shutting the public out.

In Claremont, New Hampshire, Mel Wax, managing editor of the Daily Eagle, took up the cudgels against a school board which went into executive session whenever it felt like it and shut the door on his reporters. "Any outfit which is spending money that belongs to the public has no right to do it in private," Wax told me.

He felt that the parliamentary prerogative of a closed session when personalities or public taste were involved had been grossly abused. "They've used closed meetings to handle public matters," he charged. "We're not going to let 'executive session' be stretched into an autocratic closed corporation. We don't like secret meetings. And we don't like the public shut out." (The board mended its ways after Wax's editorial blast.)

School Board Accused of Trickery

James R. Miles, an unsuccessful candidate for the Arlington, Virginia, School Board, charged during the election campaign last fall that board meetings had been recessed rather than adjourned to trick the public. "After the meeting was recessed, citizens went home thinking it was all over until the next regular meeting. But—and this was the trick—the board would be convened again 'at the call of the chairman,' " Miles said. "This new meeting—being technically a continuation of the old one—was not publicly announced. The board thus by-passed the public and met in what amounted to secrecy."

Miles asked, "Do the public schools really belong to the public or don't they?"

Some of what I saw on the education battle fronts made me wonder.

In New England, an enthusiast of the new education said to me, "We don't want parents demanding things. We hire experts, and the people should let them work. You can't listen to the public whenever it wants something."

Another, in the Midwest, remarked, "We don't want people to get the idea that they can go around telling the schools what to do."

One often hears mention on the school battle fronts of "dangerous people." I think the most dangerous man I met, from democracy's standpoint, was the little man who said after a school meeting near Boston, "Parents have no business sticking their noses in. Next thing you know they'll be running the schools."

Could any remark show greater contempt for the American way? As I walked out of this meeting, it occurred to me that if parents did have a greater hand in running the schools, if our educational system were more responsive to the will, the judgment and the innate wisdom of all the people—instead of being the private preserve of self-styled experts—we might solve a good many of our school problems much faster.

Many a school bond issue has been beaten because people felt the schools were full of hare-brained notions. Wouldn't citizens be more likely to spend money for schools they believed in? If schools did a better job of teaching, wouldn't the public be more responsive to raising teachers' pay?

A Suggestion Borrowed from Plato

Plato wrote, "What is honored in a country will be cultivated there." Bringing more honor to our school systems—not by breast-beating and shutting the people out, but by harking to the people's wisdom and doing a sound, effective job of teaching—might be the best and quickest way, after all, of getting the money for direly needed buildings and increased teachers' pay.

Never has public education in this country needed a more penetrating inquiry. The people have had drummed into them—and still do, almost daily—the materialistic facts of our school problem. Shortages of buildings and teachers have been blazoned in reams of headlines. Serious they are, indeed, and much is being done to cope with them. But too little is being said and thought about the philosophy of education. What goes on in the buildings and what is taught by the teachers are certainly as important, and many would say more important, than the bricks and mortar.

What *is* a school anyway? And what should it teach?

What makes good teachers? Where can we find them?

What is good education? Are we striving for knowledge, wisdom, excellence? Or are we settling for mediocrity?

What shall we do about discipline, about moral values? Does the ideology of progressive education help or harm?

Are we preparing our children for a world of individualism, personal responsibility, free economy and self-government? Or has public education been geared to "groupism," collective economy, and submergence of the individual?

Do teachers themselves believe in some of the bizarre and experimental notions they are required to bring into their teaching?

Are schools invading the province of the home? Are they trying to *raise* children instead of *educate* them? In the attempt to "educate the whole child," as it is put, are they failing to educate any part of him adequately?

Who—what body or group—determines what the educational philosophy of our schools should be? And how is this philosophy reflected in the classrooms of your children and mine? What say do we have in the matter?

These are some of the questions which need incisive examination. These and other dynamic facets of public-school education will be dealt with in this series of articles, to be published at intervals. Each of us has a vital, personal stake in these questions. And the health and strength of public education in this country have a vital stake in each of us. If the public schools are caught in a crossfire now, it is you and I who must save them. The silent people in every community, who do not want the public schools captured by either the extreme right or the extreme left, must speak out. I don't want my children fed into anybody's propaganda mill—the "expert" planners of a new "social pattern" or the reactionary little *Fuehrers*. I don't think you do, either. The taxes we pay must be for education, not indoctrination.

Let's educate. ▲▲▲